

In order for America to maintain our preeminent role in the world, it is critical that we provide all students with a quality education and ensure that they have the ability to pursue higher education. Due to his commitment to education, Congressman Altmire sought and received a position on the House Committee on Education and Labor. From this position, he has taken a leading role in making college more affordable, improving early childhood education and reforming the No Child Left Behind Act.

Making College More Affordable

Congressman Altmire has taken an active role in crafting legislation that makes college more affordable for American families. In 2007, Congressman Altmire helped draft the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (H.R. 2669), legislation which provided the largest increased in federal student aid in more than 60 years at no new cost to taxpayers. By 2012, this legislation will have increased the maximum value of the Pell Grant scholarship by \$1,090 and cut the interest rates on need-based federal student loans in half. In 2009, Congressman Altmire has continued to make college more affordable by voting for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which includes a \$2,500 tax credit that will help families cover the cost of tuition.

Helping Western Pennsylvania Schools Through the Economic Downturn

With America in the midst of its worst economic recession since the Great Depression, school districts across the country are struggling to make ends meet. By voting for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Congressman Altmire helped provide school districts across western Pennsylvania with millions of dollars in additional funding that will help them provide children with a first rate education. For more information, see [Western Pennsylvania Schools Will Receive Much-Needed Funding in Economic Recovery Package.](#)

Helping Graduates Repay Their Student Loans

In 2008, more than 30 million Americans held almost \$556 billion in outstanding student loans. To help graduates pay off their student loans, Congressman Altmire voted for the College Cost Reduction and Access Act and helped to create a new Income-Based Repayment program for federal student loans. Under this new program -- which went into effect on July 1, 2009 -- borrowers' monthly loan payments will be capped at just 15 percent of their discretionary income. This could save borrowers hundreds of dollars a month. For more information, see [[Altmire: Americans Will Benefit From New Student Loan Repayment Program Starting July 1](#)].

Improving Early Childhood Education

Congressman Altmire is an original cosponsor of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act (H.R. 1429). This legislation expands access to Head Start, strengthens the programs' focus on school readiness, improves Head Start teacher quality, and ensures taxpayer dollars fund only well-run programs. In addition, Congressman Altmire successfully amended the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act to help Head Start programs in rural areas confront the unique challenges that they face.

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act was signed into law on December 12, 2007.

For Congressman Altmire's statement on this issue, see [[Altmire Votes to Help Prepare Children for School Success](#)].

Reforming No Child Left Behind

Congressman Altmire fully supports the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), to ensure that all students can perform math and read at grade level by the 2013 - 2014 school year. However, he believes that the law must be reformed so that it works better for students, parents, teachers, and administrators. On September, 13, 2008, Congressman Altmire held a town hall on NCLB with the chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor to discuss the upcoming reauthorization of the law with local superintendents, principals, teachers

and parents and get their feedback on the challenges that they face in dealing with the realities of NCLB on a daily basis. One way Congressman Altmire has sought to reform NCLB is by authoring the Educational Advisor and Contractor Integrity Act (HR 3718).

This legislation combats the conflicts of interest and mismanagement discovered in the Reading First program and prevents the same abuses from occurring in other programs authorized by NCLB.

For Congressman Altmire's statement on this issue, see [
[Altmire Discusses Future of No Child Left Behind Education Law](#)
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Expanding Access to College

As a member of the House Education and Labor Committee, Congressman Altmire played a key role in shaping the Higher Education Opportunity Act (H.R. 4137), the first reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 10 years. This legislation, which became law on August 14, 2008, will encourage colleges to rein in tuition increases, restore integrity and accountability to student loan programs, simplify the federal student loan aid application process and more. Four of Congressman Altmire's legislative initiatives were included in the final bill, including a new pilot program that will help lower textbook costs and a new program that will help community colleges design credit-bearing courses that are tailored to meet local employers' hiring needs. For more information, see

[[Altmire Initiatives to Lower Textbook Costs, Improve Workforce Development to be Signed into Law](#)].